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REPORT NO.

CD NO.

COUNTRY El Salvador

DATE DISTR. 1 Mar 1949

SUBJECT Political Forces Behind Major Humberto P. Villalta
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SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

1. During recent weeks Major Humberto Villalta, placed under house arrest when Major Osorio had him removed from the Salvadoran governing junta, has been the object of growing political favor among student groups, labor groups, the Supreme Court of Justice, and foreign revolutionaries.
2. Opinion Estudiantil, a weekly publication of the University students, suspended during the regime of President Castaneda, resumed activity immediately after the December coup d'etat and supported the revolutionary government until Villalta's removal as Chief of the Armed Forces on 17 January. As of that date, the newspaper was again suspended in protest against Osorio's action. Beginning 31 January, publication commenced again, with the editorial tone one of frank opposition to the government, and support for the cause of Villalta. Two thousand copies of the 31 January issue were sent to the Union de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros (UTF), the vanguard of organized labor, and distributed by that organization to its members throughout the country. Ulises Flores, Amilcar Martinez, Abelardo Torres, and Jorge Ariza Gomez, student leaders of the pro-Villalta faction, are reportedly mobilizing the students to oppose the junta at mass public demonstrations.
3. On 31 January, the Comité de Reorganización Obrera (CRO) met and decided to support Villalta and to join with the students in organizing demonstrations.
4. A student of Economy at the National University named Antonio Monterrosa was exiled to Honduras because he approached Lt. Col. Adan Parada, Commander of the 1st Infantry Regiment and tried to convince him that he should support Villalta. Monterrosa is ex-President of the Union de Empleados de Comercio.
5. Villalta has asked for and received the protection of the Supreme Court of Justice. The court named Judge Alfredo Vigil to request the junta to justify its actions in the abuse of Villalta and to withdraw the house guard from his property. According to source, the members of the Supreme Court would resign en masse in the event of any further action of repression against Villalta, thus creating another government crisis.

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6. Dr. Carlos Castillo Ibarra, a Salvadoran revolutionary leader, was trying to obtain Salvadoran support in the movement against Somoza, was summoned to El Salvador from Guatemala on 3 February by Dr. Virgilio Godoy, a Salvadoran revolutionary leader. Godoy told Castillo Ibarra that there were about \$800 worth of guns available in El Salvador. Castillo Ibarra stated that he was also interested in another lot of armaments, and that the money for the two purchases would be furnished by Dr. Geronimo Aguilar Cortes. Aguilar would reportedly furnish up to \$20,000.

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7. Castillo Ibarra was believed to be undecided whether to offer the guns to Villalta's military-civilian coalition, or use them in favor of the Osorio forces.*
8. A Salvadoran newspaperman and radio commentator, Joaquin Castro Cerizales, known as Quino Caso, visited Villalta on 26 January and subsequently broadcast that special considerations prevented him from making any announcement in regard to a very important matter of public interest. According to source, Manuel Sevilla, a Honduran exile and collaborator of Quino Caso on the newspaper Tribuna Libre, stated that in visiting Villalta, Quino Caso was representing Major Osorio. The purpose of the visit was to offer Villalta Osorio's guarantee that he would be allowed to stay in the country free from government persecution as long as he remained aloof from politics and ceased his oppositionist activities. Sevilla said that Quino, who is a Villalta partisan, accepted the commission from Osorio only after refusing to make any proposition to Villalta which involved his leaving the country. Villalta reportedly refused to give up the fight.

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Comment. President Arevalo of Guatemala is strongly suspected of materially aiding Villalta's cause against Osorio. Since Castillo Ibarra is very close to Arevalo, it is possible that Castillo Ibarra is acting as a direct agent of Arevalo with a view to stirring up trouble in El Salvador.

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